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AUTHOR Chasin, Karen; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The Transition Program for Refugee Children (TPRC) is designed to provide target students with the linguistic and cultural skills necessary for a successful transition into the educational and societal mainstream. In 1982-83, the program served 885 students in 18 New York City high schools. TPRC funds--provided under the Refugee Act--supported classes in English as a Second Language (ESL) or content-area instruction with an ESL approach. Because the Refugee Act funds were limited, amounting to six full-time teacher positions distributed across the 18 schools, such monies necessarily were combined with funds from other sources in individual schools. As a result, the extent and kind of services actually provided varied from site to site. In addition, funds for 1981-82 and 1982-83 were combined and were allocated late. This report presents the assessment instruments and procedures and the results of testing to evaluate student achievement in 1982-83. The data provided suggest that TPRC students made progress in their knowledge of English syntax and in mathematics. It is difficult, however, to offer meaningful interpretations of the data for two reasons. First, only a limited number of cases were reported. Second, the combination of funds to create coherent academic programs, while justifiable from an educational standpoint, makes questionable the attribution of growth to any individual funding source. (GC)

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THE TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN 1982-1983

OEE Evaluation Report

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O.E.E. Evaluation Report

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THE TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN 1982-1983

Contact Person:
Eli Plotkin, Program Manager
H.S. Bilingual/E.S.L. Programs
Division of High Schools
New York City Public Schools

O.E.E. Bilingual Education Evaluation Unit

Judith Stern Torres, Manager

Prepared by:

Karen Chasin
Robert Schulman
Margaret H. Scorza

New York City Public Schools
Office of Educational Evaluation
Richard Guttenberg, Director

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THE TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

Year of Operation:	1982-1983
Number of Participants:	885 students in grades 9 to 12
Location:	18 high schools in New York City Central Administration: 1171 65th Street, Room 502 Brooklyn, New York
Contact Person:	Eli Plotkin, Program Manager H.S. Bilingual/E.S.L. Programs Division of High Schools New York City Public Schools

I. OVERVIEW

The Transition Program for Refugee Children (T.P.R.C.) is designed to provide target students with the linguistic and cultural skills necessary for a successful transition into the mainstream of the school so that they may function in an English-speaking society. T.P.R.C. funding supports classes in English as a second language (E.S.L.) or content-area instruction with an E.S.L. approach, specifically designed to improve participating students' English language listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. The program also proposes to acclimate students to American life and culture.

Funds provided under the Refugee Act are limited, amounting to the equivalent of six full-time teacher positions which are distributed across the 18 schools whose students generated the funds city-wide. Thus, the typical participating school may receive funding amounting to 0.4 full-time equivalents, to be used to provide instruction. Given the

limited nature of the funding, Refugee Act monies are necessarily combined with funds from other sources in the individual schools. As a result, the extent and kind of services actually provided to an entitled student may vary considerably from site to site.

Also having an impact on the implementation of services for refugee students is the fact that the 1981-82 and 1982-83 allocations were combined into one. In addition, the monies were received and allocated late, so that services funded by the Refugee Act were implemented only in the second half of the 1982-83 school year. This would appear to make comprehensive planning very difficult in the participating schools.

The necessary mixing of funds, variations in services, and late receipt of funding, make it most difficult to isolate the effect of T.P.R.C. funding for evaluation purposes. As a result, student outcomes should be interpreted with caution.

In 1982-83, 885 students were served in 18 New York City high schools. Table 1 presents the number of program students by site, and Table 2 presents a breakdown of the students by grade.

TABLE 1

Number of Program Students by Site

School	Number of Students
F.R.F.E. School	46
Far Rockaway	16
Flushing	26
Newtown	106
Long Island City	64
Franklin D. Roosevelt	36
Erasmus Hall	24
New Utrecht	89
Abraham Lincoln	52
Midwood	23
John F. Kennedy	30
Theodore Roosevelt	101
Walton	58
Christopher Columbus	32
Park West	70
Lower East Side Prep	19
Washington Irving	20
Seward Park	79
TOTAL	885

Source. Project records: roster of students who generated the funds.

TABLE 2

Number of Program Students by Grade

Grade	Number of Students
9	215
10	363
11	148
12	105
TOTAL	831*

*Grade information was missing for 54 students.

II. FINDINGS

This section presents the assessment instruments and procedures, and the results of the testing to evaluate student achievement in 1982-83. The data set for the Transition Program for Refugee Children was assembled in the following manner. The Division of High Schools supplied a roster of students served. Some of these were served in schools receiving funds and participating in the Chapter I/P.S.E.N. E.S.L. program. These students were tested with the CREST as part of the on-going evaluation of that program. Other T.P.R.C. students were served in schools not receiving Chapter I or P.S.E.N. funds; these students were CREST tested by the personnel of the Division of High Schools and approximately 300 data sheets for these students were submitted for key-punching along with those from the Chapter I/P.S.E.N. program to form one data set. The roster of students served with T.P.R.C. funds was then matched against the CREST data set and scores for T.P.R.C. students were drawn from the data set for analysis. In the interest of completeness, another match was performed to extract scores on the New York City Reading and Mathematics Tests for those students who lacked CREST scores.

The resultant number of cases with complete test scores was rather low for several possible reasons. The number of data sheets submitted for non-Chapter I students at a particular school, for example, sometimes differed substantially from the number of students at that school who generated the funds. Errors in data entry generally account for some loss of information especially when files are matched. Additionally, it appears that many students, although in E.S.L. classes, did

not have test data reported. The possible reasons for this are many: some students may not have been CREST tested because of absence. Yet others might not have scores on city-wide tests due to absence on testing dates or because they were excused from the tests due to their recent immigrant status. Because subject attrition may not have been an entirely random process, the resulting subset of students for whom complete data are available may not be representative of the program population.

ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH SYNTAX

The Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test (CREST) was used to measure English language achievement. The CREST was developed by the New York City Public Schools to measure mastery of instructional objectives of the E.S.L. curricula at the high school level. There are four items for each objective, and mastery of an objective is achieved when three of the items are answered correctly. The test has three levels: beginning (I), intermediate (II), and advanced (III). The maximum score on Levels I and II is 25, while the maximum score on Level III is 15.

Mean differences between pre-test and post-test are calculated to represent the gain score, and an index which represents the number of objectives mastered per month is computed. However, since the levels are not equated vertically, it is impossible to measure gains for students who change levels. Extensive information on CREST objectives and psychometric properties appears in the Technical Manual, New York City English as a Second Language Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test.*

*Board of Education of the City of New York, Division of High Schools, 1978.

The CREST was administered to both the Chapter I and non-Chapter I groups at the beginning and end of the spring semester. Data were missing or incomplete for approximately half of the students.

Table 3 presents the test results for Chapter I students who were pre- and post-tested with the same test level during the semester. Examination of Table 3 reveals that Chapter I students mastered an average of 1.10 objectives per month in the spring term. City-wide objectives for E.S.L. students are for the acquisition of one CREST objective for every four weeks of school attendance. As a whole, Level I and II students realized the city-wide standards. Level III students gained an average of 0.58 objectives per month. There were slight ceiling effects manifest on all three CREST levels, which were stronger on Level III and would thus have lowered the observed gain for students tested on that level.

Results for the non-Chapter I students are presented in Table 4. There was a total of 225 cases with valid pre-test and post-test scores on Levels I through III. Average gains per month were 1.33 CREST objectives for students tested on Level I, 1.24 CREST objectives for Level II students, and 0.65 CREST objectives for students at Level III. Ceiling effects were observed on all three test levels but were not sufficiently strong to negate gains in English comprehension made by these students. Overall, these students surpassed the city-wide accepted criterion of one CREST objective mastered per month.

TABLE 3

Results of the Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test

(Chapter I Students Pre- and Post-Tested on Same Test Level)

Spring

Test Level	Number of Students	Average Number of Objectives Mastered Pre	Post	Objectives Mastered*	Average Months of Treatment	Objectives Mastered Per Month
I	64	14.17	18.67	4.50	3.06	1.50
II	84	16.17	20.14	3.98	3.07	1.30
III	82	10.43	12.21	1.78	3.01	0.58
TOTAL	230	13.57	16.90	3.34	3.05	1.10

*Post-test minus pre-test.

TABLE 4

Results of the Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test

(Non-Chapter I Students Pre- and Post-Tested on Same Test Level)

Spring

Test Level	Number of Students	Average Number of Objectives Mastered Pre	Post	Objectives Mastered*	Average Months of Treatment	Objectives Mastered Per Month
I	51	16.20	20.16	3.96	3.08	1.33
II	94	16.61	20.40	3.80	3.14	1.24
III	80	10.7	12.69	1.99	3.11	0.65
TOTAL	225	14.41	17.60	3.19	3.12	1.05

*Post-test minus pre-test.

Another instrument used to measure achievement in reading and writing in English was the New York City Reading Test, actually two standardized tests which have been renormed with students from the New York City public schools. Grades 9 through 12 use the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (C.T.B.S.) and the California Achievement Test (CAT) as follows:

Grade	Test	Level
9	C.T.B.S.	3
10	CAT	18
11	C.T.B.S.	4
12	CAT	19

Information on psychometric properties may be obtained from the test publishers. New York City norms may be obtained from the New York City Public Schools, Office of Testing, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201.

"Effect size" was calculated for each grade level, following the procedure recommended by Cohen.* An effect size for correlated t-test is an estimate in standard deviations, freed of sample size, of the difference between means. Effect size provides additional substance to the analysis as it may be interpreted in light of Cohen's recommendations:

.20 = small effect size

.50 = moderate effect size

.80 = large effect size

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*J. Cohen, Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences, Academic Press.

Table 5 presents results for the New York City Reading Test. Only small numbers of students were reported, possibly reflecting the fact that most I.P.R.C. students are recent arrivals, and might have been excused from city-wide testing. Results indicate that raw score gains were statistically significant for the tenth and twelfth graders with moderate to large effect sizes for these students. Ninth graders, although manifesting a small positive effect size, remained at the eleventh percentile on both pre- and post-tests. Tenth graders rose from the ninteenth to the thirty-first percentile, for the largest gain. The fact that ninth-grade students did not perform at a higher post-test percentile than their pre-test indicates that perhaps the test was too difficult for them and that another test might be used with these students of limited English proficiency.

TABLE 5

English Reading Achievement

Significance of the Total Raw Score Differences Between Initial and Final Test Scores of Students with Full Instructional Treatment on the New York City Reading Test, by Grade

Grade	N	Pre-Test Mean	Pre-Test Deviation	Post-Test Mean	Post-Test Deviation	Mean Difference	Corr. Pre/post	T-Test	Level of Significance	Mean Square Within	Effect Size
9	9	28.56	6.25	30.67	7.75	2.11	.30	0.76	.470	8.34	.25
10	17	29.71	12.39	35.00	13.64	5.29	.79	2.59	.020	8.43	.63
11	*										
12	16	29.56	8.59	35.81	9.47	6.25	.67	3.41	.004	7.34	.85

*Insufficient number of students to perform statistical test.

MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT

Mathematics achievement was measured with the New York City Mathematics Test. The New York City Math Test employs the Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK) and is designed to measure general mathematics competence. It emphasizes arithmetic and numeric concepts and applications with minor emphasis on algebra, geometry, and measurement. The TASK, which has two forms, is a two-level test. Level I is designed for grades 8, 9, and 10; Level II for grades 11 and 12 and junior college level. The TASK was normed on two national samples. Further information is available from the Psychological Corporation, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44130.

Results of this test are presented in Table 6. Refugee Program students showed statistically significant raw score gains for all grades and moderate to large effect sizes. When these results were converted to percentile standings, gains averaged six percentile points for each year. Post-test percentile ratings were 32 for both ninth and tenth graders and stood at the sixty-sixth percentile for the twelfth graders.

TABLE 6

Mathematics Achievement

Significance of the Total Raw Score Differences Between Initial and Final Test Scores of Students with Full Instructional Treatment on the New York City Mathematics Test, by Grade

Grade	N	Pre-Test Mean	Pre-Test Deviation	Post-Test Mean	Post-Test Deviation	Mean Difference	Corr. Pre/post	T-Test	Level of Significance	Effect Size
9	27	25.15	9.43	28.70	9.77	3.56	.74	2.64	.014	.51
10	82	29.02	9.10	31.93	7.94	2.90	.72	4.06	.0001	.45
11	51	21.18	7.89	24.98	8.22	3.80	.84	5.93	.0001	.83
12	50	31.64	8.07	34.14	8.61	2.50	.72	2.82	.007	.40

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The available data suggest that T.P.R.C. students are progressing in their knowledge of English syntax and in mathematics. Nevertheless, although Refugee Program students met New York City guidelines for English language achievement, complete CREST data were available for only 51 percent of the participating students. Information was also available for only 42 additional students tested with the New York City Reading Test.

The sources of the difficulty in collecting information on T.P.R.C. students city-wide are many, and have been indicated in the introductory section of this report. It appears that information for many students is not being processed centrally (i.e., not all students may be in E.S.L. classes, or CREST-tested). In addition, clerical errors accumulate as data are subjected to successive manipulations, resulting in lowered match rates across data files. In response, future data collection efforts will attempt to "flag" centrally-processed records to better control the information now lost through matching of records. Other more ambitious responses, such as a city-wide testing program for reimbursably funded E.S.L. students, would not seem feasible given the variety of treatments the students receive, and the excessive burden of additional testing this would impose on the participating schools. The number of students with missing or incomplete scores, however, suggests that efforts should be made in the participating schools to test all students and report the information as completely as possible.

In conclusion, it is difficult to offer meaningful interpretations of the data for T.P.R.C. students for two reasons. Clearly, the limited number of cases reported indicates that generalizations about the progress of the whole group of students should be made with caution, at best. In addition, however, the combination of funds to create coherent academic programs, which is educationally correct and sensible, makes the attribution of growth to an individual funding source questionable. A better approach to the evaluation of the progress made by T.P.R.C. students would be to conduct a global assessment of the delivery of services to LEP students across funding sources.

A final issue of importance involves the implementation of services supported by the Refugee Act. Funding was received at mid-year, making it difficult to plan for the optimal use of the monies. This might have resulted, for example, in programs not being able to identify and place staff in the fall, possibly resulting in less systematic or extensive services during the year due to the lack of personnel. Clearly, timely provision of funding would improve the planning and implementation of services to T.P.R.C. students.